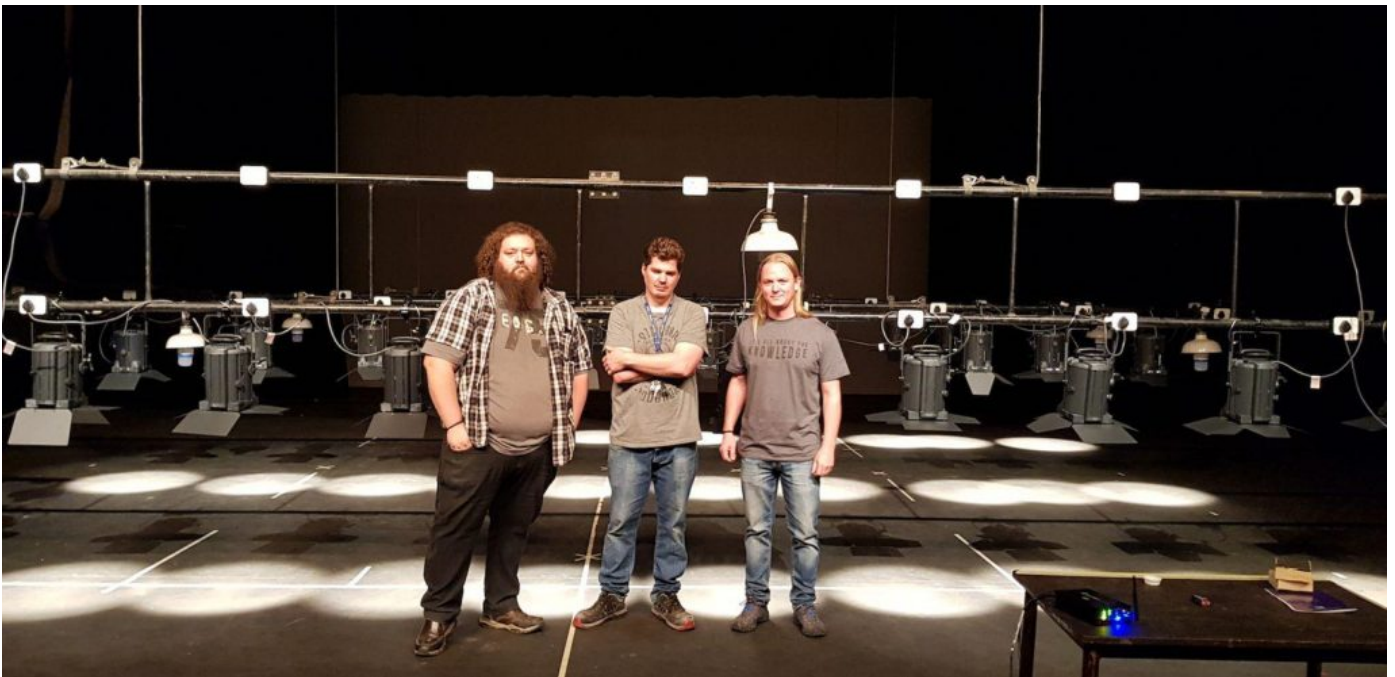


Tungsten, a teacher at the Wynand Mouton Theatre

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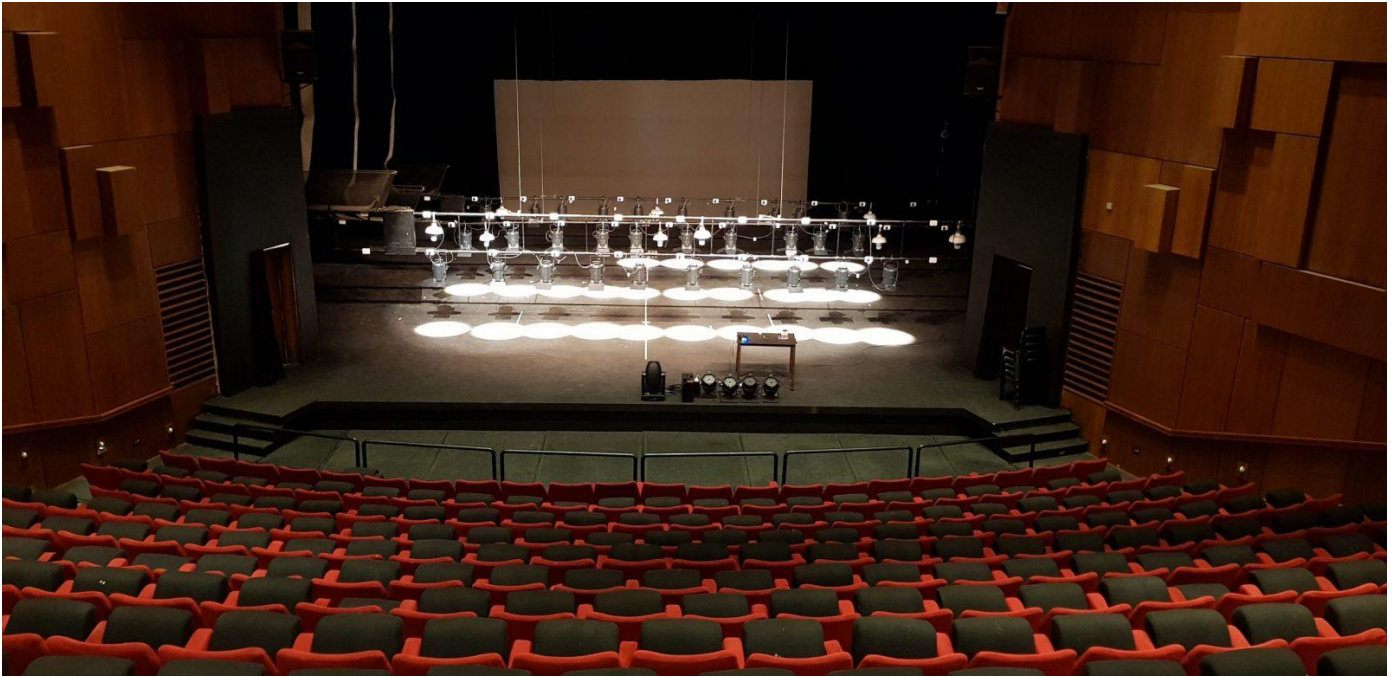
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Wynand Mouton's Nick Beukes and Brandon Hewetson with Kevin Stannett from DWR.

The Wynand Mouton Theatre based at the University of the Free State is delivering some of the best performers and technicians the country has to offer. The theatre recently upgraded their lighting system and opted to replace what they had, tungsten fixture for tungsten fixture, with the firm belief that students should train on the basics and understand light before they can understand lighting.

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In a tender brief, the theatre team, including Thys Heydenrych, drama lecturer and also the Vrystaat Arts Festival Technical Manager, Theatre Manager Brandon Hewetson and Stage Manager Nick Beukes, were specific in what they needed. The tender was won by ABP Electrical, an electrical company based in the Free State, who turned to DWR Distribution to supply 30 Selecon Rama 1k Fresnels, 28 Selecon SPX Profiles, 4 Claypaky Axcor 300 Spots, 12 Longman F4Ups, a dot2 XLF console, a LumenRadio CRMX transmitter with three receivers and a MVS Hazer. DWR's Kevin Stannett and Jannie de Jager assisted with the installation and training, and during this time, discovered the heart of how things are done at the Wynand Mouton Theatre.

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Drama lecturer Thys  
Heydenrych

The theatre is used extensively by students who work on many productions and hosting festivals such as the Vrystaat Arts Festival. Third-year students attending the University of the Free State also have the opportunity to specialise either as a performer or to focus on theatre backstage, discovering the technical and what goes on behind the scenes, focusing fixtures, getting trained on consoles and learning about gear used on productions.

“This is going to sound cliché, but theatre and teaching students is in my bones,” says Thys, who has been at the university for sixteen years, starting as a student in 2003 and as a lecturer since 2006. “Bringing stories to life, exploring the human condition through performing art, making people think about humanity and the world, is what drives me. And this is what I try to bring to my students. There is nothing more rewarding than seeing a student grow, not only as an artist but also as a human, discovering themselves and how they fit into the world. Seeing a first-year student starting his studies with only their passion, and then watching them grow as artists, not

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only on the performance side but also technically, makes getting up in the morning worthwhile. Creating a lighting design, or sound design, or calling a show as stage manager; it is an art, you create, you enhance the story. I have a foot in both worlds, the technical, as well as performance, and both are equally rewarding. The support and assistance from DWR on this project have been amazing.”



Kevin Stannett from DWR comments, “We replaced what the theatre had one for one. So, where they had old 1K fresnels we replaced them with new 1K fresnels, where they had old 1K profiles, we replaced them with new 1K profiles and the number of fixtures were exactly the same. Obviously, they didn’t have the F4Ups, the Axcors or LumenRadio before as this is much newer technology. The Ramas are old school tungstens, but drama lecturer Thys Heydenrych, who is not much older than I am, believes that as the theatre is a training institution, the students need to train on the basics. They need to understand the properties of light, distribution of light and colour theory that they can only get from tungsten. There is something about going through the process of designing a lighting plan, choosing your gels and then going through the process of focusing the lights. He is one hundred percent right, ask any lighting designer.”

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This certainly is an important topic for discussion, believes Jannie de Jager of DWR. “We often see the knowledge gap with newcomers who are only used to LED. Even something as simple as understanding the nature of coloured light and how to light a floral dress, for instance. If you have experience with tungsten and gels the whole exercise becomes a lot easier. With LEDs, it’s a little bit different. Tungsten offers a wider colour spectrum than LED, making it a lot more usable. Other than that, tungsten is a heated filament, and when that fixture dims up and down, it’s the smoothest dimming curve and exactly what theatre is all about, subtle changes. Naturally when tungsten dims, there is a phenomenon that happens called red-shift. This means the lower the intensity, the more red appears in the light output. And that’s because of the residual heat on the tungsten filament. These are just some of the important lessons to learn about theatre lighting. Staging a wide range of drama productions is what Wynand Mouton Theatre does best, and also why the team chose to go this route.”

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DWR's Jannie de Jager

For the lighting control, a dot2 XLF replaces the old Jands Vista. "The dot2 is efficient," said Jannie. "There is more than one way to get from A to B, but it's user-friendly and the theatre team love it. They are already so clued-up and passionate about what they do, which made completing the training a breeze."

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